Book Reviews

The Western Journal of Medicine *does not review all books sent by publishers, although information about new books received is printed elsewhere in the journal as space permits. Prices quoted are those given by the publishers.*

OCCUPATIONAL LOW BACK PAIN—Edited by Malcolm H. Pope, PhD, Professor of Orthopaedics and Professor of Mechanical Engineering, and John W. Frymoyer, MD, Professor of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation, University of Vermont, Burlington, and Gunnar B.J. Andersson, MD, Associate Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Göteborg, Sweden. Praeger, 521 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10175, 1984. 344 pages, $41.95.

This book brings together experts in multiple disciplines to address the state of the art in knowledge of cause, management and prevention of low back pain. The book is divided into seven sections to include anatomy and biomechanics of the spine, epidemiology and cost of low back pain, cause, patient care, prevention, legal aspects and future directions.

Not all readers will fully understand this text as some of it is quite technical, particularly in the biomechanical area. Nonetheless, it is an outstanding effort and this text will be well received by a wide audience.

For practicing physicians the section on clinical classification assumes familiarity with clinical medicine and does not explore the differential diagnosis of low back pain, but rather confines the presentation to spinal causes. The section on evaluation of workers with low back pain provides a nice review of the technique of examining patients, and the chapter on treatment education and rehabilitation is a marvelous presentation of a rational approach to the management of acute and chronic back pain without gimmicks. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book. The chapter on impairment rating provides a nice overview but does not solve the difficult task of impairment rating.

The sections dealing with prevention of back pain and worker selection provide significant data and concepts of which physicians are generally unaware.

Each chapter is distinct, adequately illustrated by line diagrams and well referenced. I highly recommend this text for all those working with patients suffering from low back pain.

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INTERPRETATION OF CLINICAL LABORATORY TESTS—REFERENCE VALUES AND THEIR BIOLOGICAL VARIATION—Edited by Gérard Siest, PhD, Head, Laboratory Department, Center for Preventive Medicine, Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy, and Professor of Biochemical Pharmacology, University of Nancy; Joseph Henny, PhD, and Françoise Schiele, PhD, Directors, Laboratory Department, Center for Preventive Medicine, Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy, France, and Donald S. Young, MB, PhD, Department of Laboratory Medicine, Mayo Clinic and Foundation, Rochester, Minnesota. Biomedical Publications, PO Box 8209, Foster City, CA 94404, 1985. 455 pages, $42.50.

This text is not so much concerned with the rather broad topic of *Interpretation of Clinical Laboratory Tests,* as the main title implies, but is much more specifically oriented to the subject matter of the subtitle, *Reference Values and Their Biological Variation.* Initial chapters present a concise description of sources of variation in testing, with particular emphasis on sources of biologic variation, such as age, sex, posture and so forth. The need clearly to define such sources in any reference population is adequately conveyed. The general presentation is followed by a rather detailed description of the methodology of establishing reference values, following techniques the editors developed in the Center for Preventive Medicine in Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy, France. Subsequent chapters (including the bulk of the book) each focus on a single analyte. All chapters discuss pathophysiology, analytic variation and pathological variation in concise terms and then offer a more detailed treatment of biologic variation and reference values. At the end of each chapter is a summary page that graphically displays major sources of biologic and pathologic variation for each analyte.

Because of the general orientation of the authors—preventive medicine—the emphasis of this treatise is clearly to define and characterize reference populations. Thus this book may be of interest to clinical pathologists, clinical chemists or other laboratory professionals concerned with developing reference values for their own institutions. In addition, this is a book of interest for those seeking a reference for the multitude of sources for biologic variation. Public health professionals, as well as others interested in using tests to screen large populations, may also find this book useful. This book is of limited value to practicing clinicians, however, because of the limited treatment given to tests in disease states, the lack of any assessment of sensitivity, specificity, or other means of assessing how well tests perform in a specific clinical situation.

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ARTHROSCOPIC SURGERY UPDATE—Volume 5 in TECHNIQUES IN ORTHOPAEDICS—Edited by John B. McGinty, MD, Professor and Chairman, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston. Aspen Publishers, Inc, 1600 Research Blvd, Rockville, MD 20850, 1985. 197 pages, $36.50.

Arthroscopic Surgery Update, edited by Dr John B. McGinty, is one of a series of books titled *Techniques in Orthopaedics.* It is a collection of pieces by different authors and suffers from some of the redundancies and contradictions which characterize that format. For example, Dr Ward Casscells in the initial chapter, "The Place of Arthroscopy in the Armamentarium of the Orthopaedic Surgeon," decries the use of the arthroscope in chondromalacia patellae stating that "it is an expensive and often unnecessary procedure." The major portion of chapter 3 by Dr John Ewing, however, is devoted to description of the technique of arthroscopic patellar shaving and states, "Pain remains as the single indicator for arthroscopic intervention when chondromalacia patellae is suspected as the cause of the anterior pain syndrome." One is left with the uncomfortable choice of deciding which authority has the most valid argument.

Several of the chapters are excellent and offer clear advice regarding the appropriate indications for various arthroscopic techniques. The chapters on ankle arthroscopy and shoulder arthroscopy are excellent. The discussion centers on practical considerations involving these relatively accessible joints, and the indications seem reasonably well established. In contrast, the chapter by Richard B. Hawkins, MD, on ligamentous reconstruction of the ankle does not seem to fit into the present perspective regarding superior results utilizing this technique. The number of cases is omitted and the one case report cited showed an improvement of 16 degrees to 11 degrees after the arthroscopic procedure. Although this procedure may be of benefit in the future, it does not appear to qualify as a standard procedure for consideration at this time.

This book overall seems most suited to the experienced arthroscopist who could critically evaluate the potential role of some of the newer procedures in his practice. It does not have wide application due to the esoteric nature of some of the subject matter.

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